



M. JODI RELL
GOVERNOR

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

*Testimony presented to the
Government Administration and Elections Committee
February 22, 2010*

Governor M. Jodi Rell

*Testimony Supporting:
HB 5021: AA Implementing the Governor's Recommendations
concerning the Citizens' Election Program*

Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone, Senator McLachlan, Representative Hetherington and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 5021, An Act Implementing the Governor's Recommendations concerning the Citizens' Election Program and for your efforts to preserve this important initiative.

House Bill 5021 proposes changes to the Citizens' Election Program in response to Judge Underhill's decision in Green Party of Connecticut, et al. v. Jeffrey Garfield. Judge Underhill's decision has been appealed to the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals whose decision is expected shortly.

As you know, 2010 is an election year during which our citizens will vote to elect or re-elect all state constitutional officers and 187 members of the General Assembly. In addition, a special election for a state representative from the 120th House district will be held on March 2. In all, there may well be as many as 400 individual candidates for election to State and district offices this year.

Notwithstanding the uncertain status of the Citizens' Election Program, some of those candidates have already started their campaigns. We do not know how the uncertainty about the program has affected the decisions made by these candidates about participating in the program, nor can we know the impact that this uncertainty will have upon our elections in 2010. We do know that this uncertainty has created a fog of confusion about what rules will govern our elections this year.

House Bill 5021 is intended to dispel the confusion and provide clarity about what rules will govern campaign financing. It eliminates the additional qualifying criteria for candidates of minor parties and petitioning candidates, creating a level playing field for all candidates to qualify for CEP grants. It will provide grants in the same amount to all qualifying candidates – major party, minor party and petitioning candidates.

It would reduce the size of grant amounts in response to Judge Underhill's labeling of grant amounts as "windfalls" and defer the scheduled increase in the grant amounts based upon the consumer price index until 2014. It would also repeal the reversionary clause which has contributed to the uncertain status of the program.

Most importantly, however, it would preserve the historic Citizens' Election Program and bring certainty to the candidates who are and will be running for election in this election year. We are all justifiably proud of this program. It represents a major step forward in removing special interests from the electoral process -- progress which we must preserve.

I urge you to expeditiously report House Bill 5021 out of the GAE Committee so that it may be enacted into law by both chambers of the General Assembly before the campaign season hits full stride this Spring.

Thank you for your consideration of this important proposal.